

VZCZCXRO0263
OO RUEHDT RUEHPB
DE RUEHJA #0457/01 0750844
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 160844Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1835
INFO RUCNARF/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 000457

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, EAP/RSP; NSC FOR E.PHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/16/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS -- CAMPAIGN SEASON KICKS OFF

REF: A. JAKARTA 01366

[1](#)B. JAKARTA 00434 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The official campaign for the April Indonesian national legislative elections has kicked off in earnest. Starting from March 16, parties are free to hold large rallies and fly large banners (up until now parties have been running ads, but were not engaged in mass mobilization). Though he will still be quite active, President Yudhoyono plans to cut back on his schedule of campaign appearances after canceling some meetings late last week due to a gastric illness. In the meantime, political maneuvering is ratcheting up with two major parties--long at loggerheads--holding a much-watched meeting. END SUMMARY.

ALL OUT CAMPAIGNING BEGINS

[1](#)2. (U) March 16 marks the start of the colorful phase of the Indonesian legislative election campaign when political party members are free to march, shout, and wave banners to attract voters. Prior to this point, GOI electoral regulations allowed TV and radio ads plus posters, but not mass political gatherings. The Election Commission (KPU) has distributed campaign rally schedules for parties in every province and required parties to coordinate campaign venues with police in an effort to ensure a peaceful process. The all out campaigning phase lasts until April 5 when campaigning officially ends; the election for the national legislature (and some other regional and local bodies) takes place on April 9.

[1](#)3. (U) To emphasize the importance of a peaceful process, the GOI opened the rally phase with a four-hour ceremony in Jakarta in which all parties publicly pledged a peaceful campaign. Each of the 38 parties was allowed to bring 50 supporters to the event. Poloff and Pol FSN attended the March 16 event which proceeded peacefully. The parties--represented by supporters wearing colorful outfits and carrying banners--underscored their intention to keep things peaceful. Amid photos and singing, one leader representing an Islamic-oriented party stated: "Other parties are not our enemy; ignorance, poverty and the crisis of morality are our enemies." Rallies sponsored by political parties themselves will begin on March 17.

PRESIDENT'S SCHEDULE

[1](#)4. (C) President Yudhoyono has been traveling in recent weeks on politically-themed visits to all parts of the country. Based on what we have heard, he plans to continue traveling in order to campaign at big rallies being sponsored by Partai Demokrat (his party, which currently leads in the polls). We have heard that his schedule may be cut back

somewhat due a gastric illness that he suffered from late last week. This illness caused him to cancel some meetings he planned to attend in South Sulawesi in central Indonesia. Back in Jakarta on March 13, he went to a hospital and was declared fit. That said, in light of the normally healthy President's brief illness, the Palace announced that Yudhoyono would try "to moderate" his schedule in coming weeks so that he did not get too tired.

LEADERS OF ESTABLISHED PARTIES MEET

¶5. (C) In the meantime, politicking abounds as Indonesia enters the most heated phase of the campaign. Vice President Kalla, head of the Golkar Party, has declared that he would be ready to run for president if his party wants him to (see reftels). Still, observers see this as mostly a ploy meant to spark more voter interest in Golkar, which is lagging in the polls, by providing a public face for the party. Many of our contacts believe he will wind up once again on the ticket with President Yudhoyono. (Note: Presidential elections take place in July.)

¶6. (C) While there are doubts whether he will ultimately run for president, Kalla has been quite active. On March 12, he met with former president Megawati Sukarnoputri, the head of the Indonesian Party of Democratic Struggle (PDI-P). Golkar and PDI-P--the nation's two largest parties--have been at loggerheads for years (though both are secular-oriented). The meeting seems to have been a positive back-and-forth. There was much speculation that the meeting heralded the creation of a possible Golkar-PDI-P alliance after the legislative elections and going into the July presidential

JAKARTA 00000457 002 OF 002

elections. There was no confirmation of that, however.

A HECTIC PERIOD

¶7. (SBU) Indonesians love their politics and the coming weeks will be hectic on a national scale. As things heat up, the day-to-day campaign and talk of possible coalitions heading into the presidential elections will fill the media and daily conversations. Most importantly, Indonesians seem highly engaged in the electoral process and most plan to vote (over 70 percent of those registered--or over 170 million people--are expected to cast ballots).

HUME